

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TAIPEI 04998 010539Z
ACTION EA-12

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UNCLAS TAIPEI 04998

E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: BENC, TW
SUBJECT: MAJOR PROJECT: RAILROAD ELECTRIFICATION

REF: STATE 184192

1. IN 1974 TAIWAN RAILWAY ADMINISTRATION (TRA) PURCHASED 94 ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES IN CONJUNCTION WITH ELECTRIFICATION OF TAIWAN'S RAILWAY SYSTEM. GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY OF ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA OBTAINED CONTRACT FOR 74 OF ITS 4,200 HP LOCOMOTIVES, WHILE CONTRACT WITH GEC OF UK WAS FOR 20 OF ITS 3,100 HP LOCOMOTIVES. GENERAL ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES TO BE SUPPLIED CONSIST OF 39 FREIGHT UNITS AND 35 WITH MOTOR ALTERNATOR SETS TO SUPPLY POWER TO PASSENGER COACHES FOR AIR CONDITIONING. ALSO, TRA NOW NEGOTIATING FOR FOLLOW-ON ORDERS WITH GENERAL ELECTRIC (BUT DEFINITELY NOT GEC) FOR 10 ADDITIONAL LOCOMOTIVES. OF ORIGINAL ORDER OF 74 GENERAL ELECTRIC NOW HAS 45 IN SERVICE WITH REMAINDER TO BE DELIVERED BY END OF 1978.

2. EMBASSY'S SENIOR COMMERCIAL SPECIALIST CALLED ON Y. L. PO, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF TRA, TO OBTAIN DETAILS AND BACKGROUND ON TAIWAN'S UNFAVORABLE EXPERIENCE WITH GEC LOCOMOTIVES. PO WAS HESITANT TO
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FURNISH COMPLETE STORY ON PURCHASE OF GEC LOCOMOTIVES FOR REASONS UNKNOWN, BUT DID ADMIT THAT GEC LOCOMOTIVES HAVE LESS HORSE POWER, LOWER SPEED AND ARE MORE LIABLE TO DC CURRENT DISTURBANCE THAN GE LOCOMOTIVES. ACCORDING TO KEY TRA ENGINEERS, GEC LOCOMOTIVES MADE IN SOUTH AFRICA WERE FOUND TO BE INFERIOR IN DESIGN AND MECHANICAL STRUCTURE. NOW TRA HAS TO MAKE ITS OWN

MODIFICATIONS ON THESE LOCOMOTIVES BEFORE PUTTING
THEM IN SERVICE.

3. ACCORDING TO GENERAL ELECTRIC REP LATEST PROBLEM IS
THAT STRUCTURAL DEFECT ALLOWED CAB OF LOCOMOTIVE TO
BECOME SEPARATED FROM BOGIES WHEN WELD AROUND CENTER
PIN FRACTURED. AS RESULT, ALL 20 GEC LOCOMOTIVES HAVE
BEEN TAKEN OUT OF SERVICE.

4. EMBASSY'S OPINION IS THAT RETICENCE OF TRA TO
ELABORATE ON PROBLEMS IS UNDERSTANDABLE, PARTICULARLY
SINCE IT COULD BECOME NECESSARY TO TURN BACK GEC
LOCOMOTIVES AS INOPERABLE. UNGER

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